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News Releases

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CCC LOAN INTEREST RATE LOWERED TO 12.25 PERCENT

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5—Commodity Credit Corporation commodity loans disbursed in January will have a 12.25 percent interest rate, Everett Rank, executive vice president of the corporation, announced today.

The new rate, down from 14.5 percent, reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in January, Rank said.

Rank also said that outstanding 1981-crop CCC loans will be adjusted to reduce the original 14.5 percent interest rate charge to 12.25 percent.

The 12.25 percent interest rate applies also to outstanding and new farm storage facility loans which are subject to the variable interest rate, Rank said.

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MUSSMAN SAYS USDA HAS TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPRESS OR ERADICATE BOLL WEEVIL

LAS VEGAS, Nev., Jan. 5—The technology to suppress or eradicate the boll weevil is available and further research will improve on this knowledge, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said here today.

Harry C. Mussman, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, speaking at a meeting of the Beltwide Cotton Research Conference, presented USDA's response to a recent National Research Council review of USDA's optimum pest management and eradication trials.

The council had recommended against going ahead with either the optimum pest management or eradication alternative. The council's recommendation, according to Mussman, was based on two key areas of disagreement—the value of using sterile boll weevils for eradication and the certainty of the pest's having been eradicated in the trial area.

The council had recommended using an integrated pest management approach rather than either of the two alternatives studied in USDA's

trials. In contrast to the council's recommendation, said Mussman, USDA believes the trials suggest clearly that singling out only one or two options for implementation under all circumstances would be unwise.

"It seems to us that a great number of factors come into play when considering the feasibility or advisability of initiating a cotton insect control program for a given area," Mussman said.

"Even so, we believe the technology for suppression or eradication of the boll weevil is available, and continuing research will improve upon our knowledge," he said.

The optimum pest management trial, conducted in Mississippi, used techniques to keep weevil populations below economic levels without eliminating them altogether, Mussman said.

The eradication trial, conducted in northern North Carolina and southern Virginia, proved that the insect could be eradicated using existing technology— which includes trapping, scouting, sterile insect release and selective applications of pesticides, Mussman said.

"Following evaluation by a USDA committee of NRC's review of the trials," said Mussman, "we identified five cotton insect management programs as candidates for further consideration."

He said the candidates range from continuing present management practices, to implementing optimum pest management using state-of-the-art technology, to various eradication plans, possibly including producer referendums.

"USDA holds the view that the future of cotton insect management is in the hands of the producers and the industry," said Mussman.

". . . Only they can determine what is best or most applicable under different sets of circumstances.

"USDA is prepared to work closely with cotton producers and the industry in trying to achieve the most appropriate approach possible in

whatever geographic area might be moving toward cotton insect programs."

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USDA RAISES COMMODITY INSPECTION FEES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 7—Effective Feb. 5, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will raise the fees it charges for inspection services of certain commodities performed by USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service.

Kenneth A. Gilles, administrator of the Federal Grain Inspection Service, said the inspection fees for hay, hops, miscellaneous processed commodities, pulses and straw were increased so they would be more equitable with the cost of the services offered.

Gilles said FGIS is also changing the fee schedule by adding new laboratory tests with corresponding fees and eliminating the cross-referencing of other tests.

Under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, there is a provision for the collection of reasonable fees which as nearly as possible cover the cost of the service provided. The current fees do not cover FGIS' costs of providing the services which are made available upon request of the applicant.

Since the last fee increase in 1977, the costs of providing the inspection services have increased more than 32 percent, he said.

"FGIS will continue to monitor costs and revenue to maintain fees at the minimum level necessary to continue an effective inspection program," Gilles said.

Under the new fee schedule, bean, lentil, and pea inspection, for example, went from \$10.35 per lot to \$13.40 for a quality and dockage analysis.

A rule recommending the fee increases and changes in certain commodities and inspection services was proposed Aug. 26, 1981, with a 30-day public written comment period ending Sept. 25. The full fee schedule, as originally published in the Federal Register on Aug. 26, 1981, will be adopted by final rule when published in the Jan. 5 Federal Register. The fees will become effective 30 days after that date.

For further information on the new fee schedule, contact Lewis Lebakken, Jr., Regulations and Directives Management, rm. 1636-S, FGIS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Phone (202) 447-9172.

BLOCK ESTABLISHES COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF EXTENSION

WASHINGTON, Jan. 8—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block has established a committee to advise him on the future of the nation's informal education network.

Block said the committee, called the Joint Committee on the Future of Cooperative Extension, will meet for the first time on Jan. 27-29 at the Key Bridge Marriott Hotel, Arlington, Va. The meeting will be open to the public.

The committee will advise the Secretary on policies and programs affecting the federal-state-local cooperative extension system throughout the 1980's and beyond. The agenda for the first meeting includes a review of background studies and discussion of issues facing the new committee.

The committee is a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges.

USDA members will represent the secretary of agriculture, director of science and education, and the Extension Service. Other members will represent university presidents, deans of colleges of agriculture and home economics, directors and administrators of state extension programs, county agents, extension users and foundations supporting agricultural work.

Leading the committee's activities will be Raymond D. Lett, executive assistant to Block, and Daniel G. Aldrich, Jr., chancellor of the University of California-Irvine.

NOTE: For more information, contact Mary Nell Greenwood, administrator of the Extension Service, (202) 447-3377.

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BLOCK TO BE HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF AGRICULTURE DAY ON MARCH 18

WASHINGTON, Jan. 8—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block will serve as honorary national chairman of Agriculture Day 1982. The nationwide observance on March 18 celebrates U.S. agriculture's success in providing the world's most abundant and highest quality food supply.

"Every American should be proud of this nation's tremendous record of agricultural achievements," Block said. "It's a vital part of what makes America the great country that it is."

Block also served as honorary chairman in 1981.

The theme of the observance — "Agriculture: It's Your Heartbeat, America!" — is illustrated by a print out of an electrocardiogram containing an image of farm buildings.

Agriculture Day is coordinated by the Agriculture Day Foundation—a private, non-profit educational corporation with staff provided by the Agriculture Council of America Education Foundation. State and local activities in many areas will run through March 24.

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24 STATES SIGN TO DISTRIBUTE FREE CHEESE TO NEEDY

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11—Twenty-four states have signed agreements with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to receive processed American cheese for distribution to needy persons, Mary C. Jarratt, assistant secretary for consumer services, said today.

Nine of these states—Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, Nebraska, California, Montana and Nevada—already are giving away the cheese, she said.

Latest information indicates that at least 6 million pounds have been released to state agencies for distribution.

California and Nevada began distribution procedures Dec. 23, the day after President Reagan announced release of the cheese, Jarratt indicated. Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas began distribution the following week, with Louisiana beginning shortly thereafter. Iowa,

Montana and Nebraska began giving away the cheese last week. The District of Columbia and New Mexico will begin distribution this week. The Washington, D.C. giveaway marks the first distribution of the cheese on the east coast.

Other states that have completed agreements are Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Colorado, Missouri and Kansas. Some states have either ordered, or are in the process of having shipped their first allotments of cheese.

Most states that have not yet signed agreements or begun distribution are applying and all have indicated some level of interest in receiving donations, she said. The interruption of the holidays, in addition to the severe winter storms sweeping the country, have in many cases delayed start-up procedures.

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FIRE ANT QUARANTINE EXTENDED IN 7 STATES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11—New areas of 70 counties in seven southern states have been added to the federal quarantine to prevent the spread of the imported fire ant, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials report.

Thomas J. Lanier, chief regulatory officer with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said this action includes new areas of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas where fire ant infestations have been found since federal quarantines were last amended.

Lanier said federal regulations restrict the movement of certain articles and products that could artificially spread the imported fire ant unless they are inspected and treated, if necessary. They include soil, nursery stock with soil attached, grass sod, hay, straw and used mechanized soil moving equipment.

The imported fire ant is an aggressive stinging insect that builds numerous large mounds in pastures, fields, lawns, parks and other open areas. The stings of these insects can cause severe allergic reactions.

Presence of the mounds, which may contain 200,000 ants, and the insects interfere with farming, gardening, and the use of school grounds and public recreation areas.

New regulated areas have been added to the quarantine for the imported fire ant in these counties:

ALABAMA: Cherokee.

ARKANSAS: Calhoun, Cleveland, Columbia, Desha, Lafayette, Miller, Ouachita.

GEORGIA: Burke, Candler, Cherokee, Cobb, Columbia, Emanuel, Floyd, Glascock, Haralson, Jefferson, Jenkins, McDuffie, Morgan, Oconee, Paulding, Richmond, Rockdale, Walton, Warren.

MISSISSIPPI: Alcorn, Carroll, Grenada, Leflore, Prentiss, Sunflower, Yalobusha.

NORTH CAROLINA: Beaufort, Bladen, Craven, Pender, Robeson.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Allendale, Barnwell, Dillon, Fairfield, Florence, Lee, Lexington, Marion, Marlboro, McCormick, Newberry, Williamsburg.

TEXAS: Aransas, Bell, Blanco, Cass, De Witt, Falls, Goliad, Hays, Henderson, Hill, Jim Wells, Kerr, Marion, McLennan, Rains, Refugio, Rockwall, Upshur, Wilson.

Although the quarantine and regulations become effective immediately in these new areas; public comments may be submitted through March 15. Comments may be sent to: Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Notice of the action is scheduled to be published in the Jan. 12 Federal Register.

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GRAZING FEES LOWERED ON WESTERN NATIONAL FORESTS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13—For the second year in a row, fees for grazing livestock on national forests in 16 western states have been reduced, R. Max Peterson, chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, said today.

The states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Peterson said 1982 national forest grazing fees in these western states will be \$1.86 per animal month, \$.45 less per animal month than in 1981. An animal month is the grazing of one cow, one horse, or five sheep for one month.

Grazing fees are determined by a formula established by Congress in the Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978.

The formula, which is being used on a seven-year trial basis, considers rates for leasing private grazing lands; the difference between total costs of grazing on public and private lands; beef cattle prices; and the costs of producing livestock.

"Grazing fees are lower again this year because the prices farmers and ranchers received for beef declined while the costs of livestock production increased," Peterson said. "These factors play a prominent role in determining grazing fees under the formula prescribed by law."

Peterson said that although the average lease rate for private lands increased 12 percent last year, from \$7.88 to \$8.83 per animal month, this increase was more than offset by an eight percent decrease in beef prices and a 13 percent increase in production costs.

As a result of the lower fees, Peterson said farmers and ranchers will pay about \$12 million to graze their livestock on western national forests in 1982. Fifty per cent of this amount will be used by the Forest Service to maintain and improve national forest rangelands.

Counties where the national forests are located will receive 25 percent of the receipts from grazing fees and the remainder will go to the U.S. Treasury.

During 1982, fees for grazing on lands administered by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management also will be \$1.86 per animal month.

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CHANGES PROPOSED FOR NATIONAL FOREST TIMBER SALES

EUGENE, Ore., Jan. 15—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service soon will propose changes in the way it sells national forest timber to private companies, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture John B. Crowell, Jr., said today.

Speaking to the Associated Oregon Loggers, he said the changes are designed to reduce excessively high bidding for the timber and encourage more prompt and orderly harvesting under various market conditions.

On Oct. 15, 1981, Forest Service Chief R. Max Peterson decided to allow extensions of most existing timber sale contracts. The continuing poor housing market has made it uneconomical for many companies to harvest timber for which they had previously bid high prices.

Crowell said the extensions and the changes being proposed today should help prevent further economic disruption to communities dependent upon national forest timber.

Among the proposed changes, which will apply only to future sales, are a requirement for a 5 percent cash deposit of the bid price; scheduling of sales payments; discounts for early harvesting; and provision for stumpage rate adjustment in western Oregon and Washington after March 31, 1983.

In addition to the proposed changes in timber sale procedures, Crowell said, Peterson will direct the Regional Forester to reduce where possible the average the length of timber sale contracts and the amount of timber offered in individual sales.

"By taking all these measures, we hope to encourage a more even harvest of timber from the national forest and a corresponding output of forest products which will benefit all American consumers," Crowell said. "The changes also will provide for a more regular flow of receipt to the U.S. treasury and to the local governments which receives 25 percent of those funds."

The public will have 45 days to comment on the proposed timber sale procedures after they are published in the Federal Register.

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